Rec'd. Dec. 20. '55.

(See Lib'r. Jan. 18.)

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Rev'd Samuel May, jun'r.
Anti Slavery Office
21 Cornhill
Boston
Mass.
U.S.

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[England]

Bridgwater, Decr 4th 1855.

My dear Mr May

I feel that I have allowed your valuable letter which I received while I was on the continent during the last summer, to remain unanswered for longer than I can justify, and so I will attempt no justification at all, but trust to you for overlooking my seeming negligence. I have not been idle since my return home, and while I was away, I was very conscientiously resting from every kind of work, that I did not take up a pen except when absolutely compelled to do so, revelling in the rare delight of enjoying nature, and taking in all the beauties of this glorious world unalloyed by the thought that I must speak of all that I felt or talk of all I saw. There is indeed a great relief at times thus to be enabled to learn without feeling obliged to teach, and I am sure you as well every one who is engaged in the arduous task of speaking your deepest thoughts, must indeed rejoice in such times of refreshment. – Not but that I enjoy my regular duties, but every now and then, the mind gets thoroughly wearied, and worn, and when as was the case with me, the body is out of sorts besides, the rest is an inestimable boon, and as such I enjoyed it. – While I was recently travelling on the continent ~~abroad however~~, I had several opportunities of speaking privately on the subject of slavery with men of every country. Americans not excepted, and I must say I did not neglect those chances. I fancy that some of your countrymen had been called upon to defend themselves before, and had met with persons who were willing to take good treatment as an apology for slavery, as that was the stock argument brought forward. Once or twice I was pleased by meeting if not with out and out abolitionists, at least with men who did not defend slavery, but recognized it as a great evil which admits of no palliation. – Most gratified was I on hearing a statement like this from two members of congress addressed to an Englishman who charged Mrs Stowe with exaggerations. They were quite warm in asserting that ~~slavery~~ the horrors of slavery could not be overdrawn. – Sorry I am to think that such excellent men, as they seemed to be, still were no more than members of what I suppose is now called the Republican Party. – They however encouraged me to persevere in our Antislavery working in England. They assured me that our sympathy did strengthen the hands of all who were desirous of freeing the States from the stain of slavery and if we offended any, it was because they felt that they were in the wrong, and to offend them, was the best way to lead them right in the end. – You will perhaps like to know who these gentlemen were. – Our conversation was private so I do not give you their names for publication, but only for private information omit [They were from the State of New York and their names are Morgan and Pringle.] They assured me they had stood their ground, as they should do, in the Nebraska struggle; and though they were not quite up to the mark, not "abolitionists of the abolitionists," yet I was glad to see that they had advanced as far as they were, and hope that they may improve. – I feel sure that if the South only continue as madly aggressive as they have been since your grand Union saving Compromise men like these will at last awaken to the conviction that disunion is the only honest and practical basis for action. — ¶ We in England have suffered a heavy loss indeed in the death of our good and noble leader Mr. Estlin. — There is no one amongst us able to take his place; and yet we need not despair, we should have not learned the lesson his life is able to teach, did we not feel faith in the great truth, that GOD is able to raise up men suited to the work required and able to accomplish it. I am rejoiced that you are writing a memorial of his excellence for our American friends. Such a man deserves to be known, and reverenced. — His example is an encouragement to all & being dead he still speaketh. — There are few individuals who have accomplished more than he did. I remember very well when I thought he was absorbed in the one great question of slavery; (and no disgrace would it be to be absorbed in such a question involving all the holiest interests of humanity) and it was only by degrees that I learned to estimate him rightly, and to feel that wherever there was suffering he was ready to assist. — The eye dispensary which he established in Bristol and which remains a monument worthy of his name, is indeed a wonderful proof of what persevering benevolence founded upon religious principle can accomplish. — We cannot mourn for him. He lived and died working for his fellowmen, and who is there amongst us, that would not rejoice if he could live as he lived and die as he died. — He was a noble man, and we who knew him must be grateful unto GOD that we were permitted to see how devotedly a fellow mortal could consecrate whole being to the Service of our Father who is in Heaven! — In our denomination we shall him frequently. His voice and his influence will no longer be exerted visibly and audibly mongst us, but his spirit will I hope not be lost; and we need not fear that he has lived in vain. I regret to read such remarks as you have been obliged to make with regard to our denomination in the States: & regret all the more that they come across the Atlantic with an additional proof. — The resolution of Mr. Hassall rejected for such a milk and water affair as that resolution about the Church in Kansas. — I am sectarian enough to think that the pure principles of Unitarianism should have borne a more truly Christian harvest. I cannot understand the apathy of our denomination. It is most distressing to me. — It is not quite a parallel case, but it is something like the temperance cause amongst us. — There are but very few amongst our ministers who see their way clearly on this point, and yet I do not know a simpler question than that connected with the teetotal movement. I was much amused at one of our Annual London Gatherings, when one of our eminent ministers was expostulating with me about the impropriety of introducing the Slavery question into the B. & F. Unitarian Society, to hear him bring as an unanswerable argument against our bringing in such subjects, that we might have teetotalism introduced next! Just think of it; a number of Christians, ministers and others meeting together to talk over the matters of greatest interest to the cause of true Christianity refusing their freedom and temperance advocated! — What can more clearly show the want of a true estimate of Christianity among us. Is it surprising that in the face of this indifference to religion increases if not positive disbelief. If religion is not to touch the daily duties of life, if it is to be something set apart for Sunday talk, the sooner it is done away with the better!

We Bridgwater folks have begun our winter campaign. — The admirable report of the American Society came in most appropriately for our first evening meeting. It was listened to with intense interest by those present, and especially were those parts regarded which spoke of the shortcomings of the Christian(?) Churches of America. I think our friends here are sound on that point, and even Mr. Young if he were to come among us, and to try for assistance to his Mission to the Turks would find himself without supporters. I only wish he would come, for the more frequently he is exposed, the better it will be. —

I have had great pleasure in making the acquaintance of Mr. Channing at Bristol a short time ago. — He attended the Domestic Mission meeting there, and spoke with that eloquence which characterizes him. He briefly alluded to the Slavery question, and has promised to come again to Bristol, in order to give us his opinions and views on this important subject more at length. — He takes a hopeful view of things, and thinks that affairs are rapidly coming to a crisis in the States. — Most sincerely do I hope he may be correct in his anticipations, but I confess I do not share them. I fear there will be a bloody conclusion to the struggle, and that the Slavery party are preparing for themselves an awful retribution. — If your Republic has to pass through a servile war, with the inevitable horrors that accompany such a struggle, the blame will (awful to say) lie on the so called Christian Church! May Heaven in mercy enlighten the professing Christians of your land and avert so fearful a catastrophe.

I can hardly believe it true that Gov.r Gardner has been reelected in Mass. I hope I have misunderstood the papers. — It is a sad disgrace if true, and I cannot believe it. I only read it in one of our weekly papers, as I have been too busy of late to read the newspapers daily. — My hopes as to the regeneration of Mass. would be sadly blighted, if this could take place. —

The letter which Mr. Garrison has addressed to the Committee which is getting up the lectures in Boston this season is admirable in my opinion. — It so clearly sets forward the fact that Slavery is not to be discussed, but abolished that I quite agree with him, in regarding it as more useful than any lecture could be.

I may be wrong but I think the letter would have been more forcible, if the remarks about the personal character of the Southern lecturers had been omitted. As a general rule I think such things weaken an argument. With this one exception, I am truly delighted with the letter and feel that the great leader has added one more to the many important services, which he has rendered to the cause of downtrodden humanity.— I conclude that he is in better health again, and rejoice in it, as do many of us here, in seeing that Mr. Jackson is better. He is well known amongst us here, and ~~many~~ several expressions of thankfulness have I heard in the last few days upon his restored health. Wishing that he may long be spared to help in the great cause, to which he has rendered such efficient help in days gone bye.

How are Mrs. Chapman and Miss Weston?— They must have had a painful meeting. We sympathise most sincerely with them in their sorrows. Will you remember me and my wife to them most cordially.— We shall not forget the pleasure which Mrs. Chapman's flying visit gave us in Bridgwater.— I suppose this letter will find you very busy in your preparations for the fair.— Our wishes for your success will be ever with you, and often shall we think of you, grateful to you, for the labours you are bearing in our common cause, and only regretting that we cannot do more to assist you. May God's blessing rest upon you and all who are engaged in the great task of labouring for human freedom, and may your labours be crowned with success.

Most respectfully
Yours
S. Alfred Steinthal

Rev. S. May junr.

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